

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Statement on Rail Safety Legislation

March 2, 2023

I applaud the bipartisan group of Senators for proposing rail safety legislation that provides many of the solutions that my administration has been calling for. This legislation provides us with tools to hold companies accountable to prevent terrible tragedies like the Norfolk Southern derailment in East Palestine and to make those communities whole.

This legislation strengthens safety requirements for all trains carrying hazardous materials and phases in newer, safer tank cars over the next 2 years, not over the next decade. It will increase safety by requiring hotbox detectors every 10 miles to prevent derailments like the one that we saw in East Palestine. It increases hazmat fees for railroads to pay for grants to train State and local firefighters and other first responders to respond to hazmat incidents. The legislation will also dramatically increase fines for safety violations from the current cap of \$225,000 to the greater of \$1 million or 1 percent of a railroad's annual operating income, which for the largest carriers like Norfolk Southern could be more than \$50 million.

This bill will make important progress, and we need to do even more, like require state of the art braking systems, provide more funding for Federal safety inspections, invest in worker safety, fortify State emergency management and response, and hold companies like Norfolk Southern accountable not just for the immediate damage, but also the long-term health and economic damage to communities like East Palestine.

I encourage Republicans and Democrats alike to move quickly to advance these commonsense rail safety measures and send me a bill to sign into law.

Categories: Statements by the President : Rail safety legislation.

Subjects: Ohio, train derailment and chemical spill in East Palestine; Rail safety legislation.

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